

Kindness Matters Service Award 2021 - 2022
Environment
Maple Lions Club – Lions E-waste

#1 Please describe your service project in as much detail as you can.

The Maple Lions Club's "Lions E-waste" program provides us with access to gently used PC's and Laptops that we, with the previous owners permission, refurbish and donate back out into our local community, the region and on a few occasions beyond to individuals, families and groups that have need of but otherwise can't afford them.

Our refurbishing process has us wiping the hard drive clean or simply destroying what is in a donated unit and replacing it with a fresh one, making needed repair and reinstalling a new operating system. We are able to do this because we have been lucky enough to work with volunteers who have the needed skill set to do this. Without them I don't think this club project would be were it is today. Along the way we have gained a few new members and community volunteers who were drawn in because they were interested in this project.

In the early years once the club had built up this project and we were actively involved in community collection events, Lion Dale had a short video made to help promote what we do. In this video you can see several of our members at one of the City's rotating Greening Day events for the community.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8ceso3FL6Y>

In the summer, mid April to late September) our club holds rotating weekend E-waste collection events in the neighbouring City of Markham. Our events there are always two days from 8 am – 4 pm. We can fill a 20 yard shipping container in the two days.

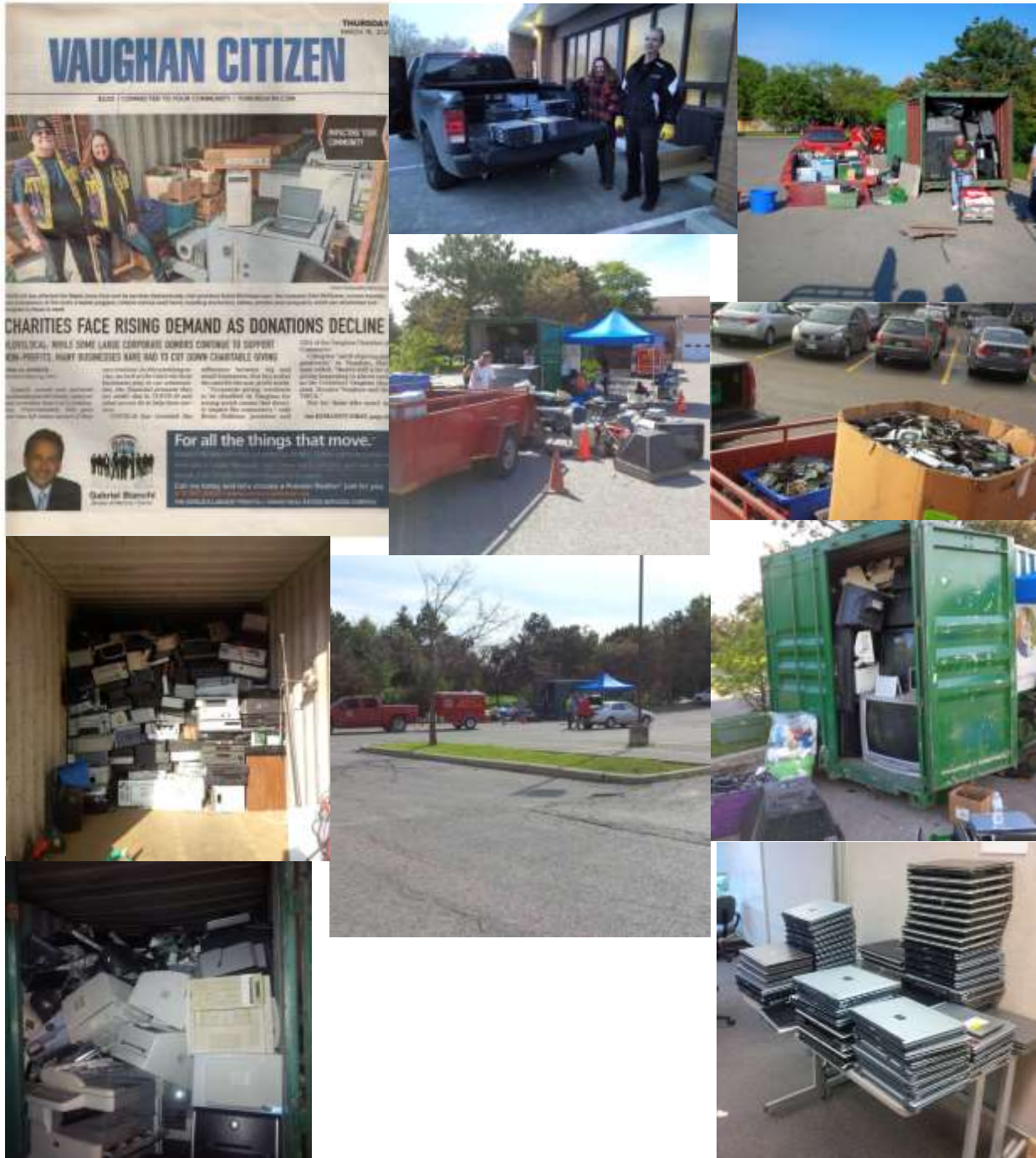
During the week and we do this all year-round we collect from businesses or condos. We do one day a week of pick-ups or we arrange drop offs at our Lions Hall where we have a bin to hold what we collect.

Collecting electronic waste gives us;

- Access to the units we need for our refurbishing program.
- Our refurbished units that we donate go to help youth, individuals, families and other community groups.
- We are able to work with a lot of local high school students who need to fulfill a set required number of volunteer hours in order to graduate at the end of high school. We also on occasion work with young offenders and adults who must complete community service hours as part a sentence with Corrections Canada.
- The regular electronic waste that we collect is sent to an electronic recycler who in turn pays the club buy the weight of what we turn in.
- This is fundraising for the club and is by far the biggest fundraiser our club does each year.

- The funds provide us with the moneys we need and use to do the different things or provide the support that we give and yes happily the list is long.
- We are engaging in an Environmental project.

Unfortunately Covid and lock downs have had a big impact on our project and all events have had to cancelled in the past two summer but we are still actively collecting weekly and operating our drop off collections at the Lions Hall. We are currently working on plans to hold a round of small collection events on weekends this fall.



#2 What was unique or outstanding or innovative about this service project?

This project began with a very different direction and at a starting point that was never planned.

Husband and wife Lions team Dale and Sylvia were at their local hospital waiting for a specialist appointment for an international student that was in their care. In the waiting room Lion Dale walked over to the bulletin board to read what was posted as a way to pass time. There was a poster from an operation called “Computer Rescue” that was requesting the donation of gently used computer equipment to be refurbished so that it would be donated back into the local community. Lions Dale was mildly interested so he took a phone number from the poster, stuck it in his wallet and yes promptly forgot about it.

Some time later Lion Dale found the number again and for fun called it. This led to a very long conversation and a meeting with Patrick who filled his retirement by becoming licensed under the Microsoft Authorised Refurbisher Service (MARS) with Computer Rescue. Patrick was finding it very hard to get donations of computers/laptops that he could work on for his project.

Lion Dale took on Patrick’s project under the club’s name and found that as a Lion people felt more comfortable donating the gently used equipment for refurbishing. Eventually Patrick also joined our club and the project began to grow.

But like many good things there was a negative to Lion Dale’s project, electronic waste. Not everything that was being donated could be used. Sometimes donations were used for parts to make repairs to other units and so on. This evolution created waste that we needed to find a safe way to dispose of.

Around the same time as this was happening the efforts of the club’s new project were being noticed by industry leaders in electronic waste management and the club was approached by one of the large electronic recyclers in the province of Ontario. Lions Dale and Sylvia accepted an offer to attend a meeting where it was suggested that there was a way for the club to gain access to more computers/laptops to be refurbished for our program and a way to safely recycle the electronic waste by-product of this project as well as producing some fundraising money for the club all the while generating greater community exposure.

WIN-WIN-WIN, when a thing sounds too good to be true it often is and the club was cautious going into a pilot project to test things out. Happily, too good to be true did come true for us and we have been running with this project now for well over a dozen years. There have been a few bumps in the road, nothing is ever perfect or always rosy but Lion Dale has always been on top of things crossing T’s and dotting I’s.

Through the first electronic waste recycler that worked with us we gained another new member, Lion Kevin, who with his skill set and talent has been able to help elevate much of what we do.

Our E-waste program has become our club’s biggest fundraiser that pays for the cost of the program, it provides funds our club uses for the assistance and donations we provide locally as well as globally. Our refurbished computers and laptops are donated out to many places such as

community groups, women's shelters, refugee's, low income families, high school students who's families struggle to afford them, school programs etc. Annually many request come to us directly from local schools, church's, community groups, social services agencies, municipal council, provincial MPP, Federal MP and even from other Lions Clubs who know about our program. At the height of our donations we were seeing 400-600 units a year being donated back out into the community.

Covid and the lock downs have not been kind to our efforts and donations are down while request went up when schools transitioned from in person to on-line so we have struggled but we have remained active and expect to continue as life keeps moving forward.

In the years that the club has been involved with this program Lion Sylvia became the district environment chair giving her a window of opportunity to promote this to other clubs in the district. A few clubs have dabbled in this with some success but there have been limitations for some. E-waste collecting can be dirty work with heavy lifting involved so it may not be suitable for everyone. There have also been restrictions due to the guidelines for the provincial electronic recycling program.

The old program has now come to an end and new program came into effect on January 1 2021 in the province of Ontario. Under the new program there are greater opportunities for Clubs to jump in and fundraise while being involved in a recycling program. Right now there is a window of opportunity to get some more clubs across the province involved by setting up a permanent collection sight at a Lions Hall if they have one or if there is room to do this where ever they meet. Currently Lion Sylvia is actively looking to recruit other clubs to get involved by setting up a permanent drop off location. As a permanent drop off location there will be much less heavy work involved allowing some clubs to add a bit of extra community fundraising while engaging in an environmental project.

#3 Why is this service project important in your community?

This project helps get much needed computer/laptops into the hands of refugee families, new immigrants, low income/at risk families, high school students who need them for school but can't afford them, community groups that provide programming or services to the community and operate on a shoe-string budget, we have even helped high school after school robotics program by supplying them with electronic components and we have helped a slew of high school students log hundreds of community service hours that are a high school curriculum requirement in the province of Ontario.

When individuals/families are in need, often we see a gap between what they have and what is available to them. Lions try to fill that gap and the fundraising we do with our E-waste program goes a long way to helping us meet those needs.

Our club provides a cost free, environmentally friendly and safe way to recycle old electronics for residence and businesses. Many Cities/municipalities have recycling centers that are open and free to drop off for residence they are not an option for businesses or all residential environments such as condos/apartment buildings. For many places paying to dispose of the electronics can be cost prohibitive. Our club offers free pick up or drop off and we have a few condos that have big bins in the parking garage alongside its other waste bins, when the bin is full they call us and book a pick up date, we hook up our trailer and pick it up. We do the same with businesses and we have quite a few places that have been working with us for several years now.

There is a shipping container in our Lions Hall parking lot that we store what we collect and when that is full the electronic recycling company send a truck out to empty it for us. The club gets paid by the weight of the material and the club earns fundraising dollars.

#4 Which local partnerships helped make this project possible, if any?

To get this project off the ground our first partnership was with Patrick and Computer Rescue, while Patrick is no longer able to be with us today but he was a very important part of our journey.

Several electronic recycling companies that we have worked with along the way as we have moved up and forward with this project, most notably GEEP (Global Electric Electronic Processing) who was more recently acquired by Quantum Lifecycle. Geep and its staff have helped us along this journey and Quantum as our newest partner continues to do so as we have transitioned from the old provincial OES program to the new EPRA program.

Locally we are where we are because our then district governor, PID Tom Gordon, helped us work out details at the time that paved the way forward as not just a club project but a potential district project.

Local grade and high schools have helped promote and start up recycling projects. We have been invited to attend grade school Eco Fairs, under the Eco Schools Canada program, to talk about recycling stewardship. We have worked with local high school robotics clubs by supplying them with components for students to use in the things they build and work on.

We annually participate in the Earth Hour event held at City Hall each year. We also work with several local community groups that have green initiatives as part of what they.

Our local BNI (Business Networking International) group was meeting in our Lions Hall and they welcomed us and our E-waste program into what they do. Many of the different members at that time were very helpful in networking out to clients what we do and helped us with making connections to businesses to collect the E-waste we were looking for as well as some of the members who were involved in social media and web management helped us a great deal to elevate our project online.

The club joined the local Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and from there we also jumped over to Vaughan Economic and Cultural Development. From here we were able to participate in some training to help us better develop an advertising and marketing strategy as well as network.

Our club is located in the City of Vaughan and we the City council and City staff has been and continue to be a tremendous asset for us enabling the club to continue with this project year after year. We participated in the City of Vaughan Greening Days and we have small collection bins in several City owned buildings.

The neighbouring City of Markham opened its door to us to hold a pilot project there that was received very well by residence and now has become a fixed part of the City's waste management program that it offers to residence. Unfortunately for us and them during the Covid restrictions all of our event weekends have had to be put on hold but we continuously remain in talks with City waste management staff in the hopes that at some point, with reopening plans, will be able to resume the rotating collection events.

#5 How did this service project elevate the Lions Brand?

Early on the club invested in visual and word of mouth advertising by attending a lot of business networking events, business trade shows, Waste & Recycling Expo Canada.

The club was able to install two community signs along major roads that can be used to post up coming events.

A few trailers were purchased by Lions Dale and Sylvia that were outfitted with Lions Logos and information. Lion Dale and Lion Sylvia added Lions decals to the doors of their vehicles that stay almost everywhere they go. The car logos have been an interesting conversation starter in parking lots and on the road and even got them in trouble with local by-law enforcement who tried to fine them for parking commercial vehicle on their residential driveways. It's been an adventure and a few laughs along the way.

It's fair to say that this has helped the club gain greater exposure in the community.

#6. Were any resources from Lions International's service resources (Advocacy Toolkits, Service Toolkits, Service Project Planners, or program webpages) used to plan and execute this project? If yes, please explain.

Our early foray into this project started out with a very different intention and on a very small scale. As this club activity grew and changed we learned, adapted and changed with it.

Tool kits that are available today through LCIF were not as developed then as they are now.

Some of the most important lessons were learned during various Lions training programs hosted by our District.

When we started out we leaned on the things we were learning from our GMT/GLT team, PDG Ray Howlett was a wealth of information and encouragement.

The first District Guiding Lions training that Lion Sylvia participated in was very impactful. One of the instructors that day was PDG Lion Mike Springford who was very insistent that clubs get to know their local Mayor and Council, MPP, MP and other local leaders. That was a lesson that stuck and has made a world of difference for our club and what we do and the support we get locally.

District training has been a valuable tool for us, it works.